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### **'Devil' Brigade alters mission**

By Mike Heronemus  
Editor

Soldiers of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, spent the majority of the past year preparing for motorized and dismounted operations in Iraq. After its deployment was suspended, the brigade finds itself reorganizing to conduct a new mission in support of the war in Iraq.

Leaders of the "heavy," tracked brigade knew it would spend more time in 2006 in wheeled "Humvees" and on foot than in their Abrams tanks, Bradley Fighting Vehicles and Paladin self-propelled howitzers. The nature of the ongoing effort to stabilize that nation and provide security while the Iraqi people walked toward a democratic society required something more from the brigade than just its tracked combat power.

Then, late in December, the "Devil Brigade" Soldiers learned the Department of Defense would put their rotation to Iraq on hold because of significant advances the Iraqi Security Forces, including the Iraqi Army and police, had made in protecting the citizens and fighting the insurgency.

That meant the 1st Bde. Soldiers got to spend the Christmas and New Year's holidays at home. It didn't mean they would get a holiday from duty in Iraq, said Col. Bart Howard, the brigade commander, after DoD had announced the delayed deployment.

Instead, the 1st Bde. assumes three new missions for the Army. One is creating Military Transition Teams, commonly referred to as MiTTs, to help the Iraqis develop their security forces even faster than they are progressing now.

### **Another is to train MiTTs for deployment.**

The third is to provide deployable security force elements that can move anywhere the Army wants them to be, said Maj. Gary M. Belcher, brigade civil military affairs officer, Feb. 2.

“We’ve only been told what we’re going to be doing,” Belcher said. “We have no specific orders that specify the end goal.”

One of the first tasks undertaken is determining the makeup of MiTTs, what equipment it will need and what the brigade will need to train MiTTs, he said.

### **MiTTs operate in Iraq already**

MiTTs already operate in Iraq, so the concept isn’t new. Putting together the 1st Bde. MiTTs and deciding what the brigade will need to train incoming MiTTs, however, will mean a lot of adjustment for the 1st Bde., Belcher said.

To help with the transition, Soldiers from Fort Carson, Colo., already involved in training MiTTs have been directed to assist the 1st Bde. by provide some guidance to the brigade staff.

One adjustment will be reconfiguring the “heavy” mechanized brigade from a combat mission to a training mission, Belcher said. “We’re looking at the requirements to train, what equipment will be needed and how to mobilize teams that will come here to train.”

The change in mission means a change in equipment and personnel for the brigade. MiTTs don’t use tanks or heavy artillery, Belcher explained, so the brigade probably won’t need the majority of its heavy equipment in the future.

The brigade’s equipment loss will be an equipment gain for the Army overall, Belcher said. “The equipment can be rebuilt and sent elsewhere, where it is needed,” he said.

The brigade also may not need as many Soldiers as it has now, Belcher said. Brigade leaders working on the reconfiguration to deployable 11-man MiTTs and the new training mission realize the brigade will need Soldiers with different skill sets than it has now.

### **Some Soldiers will deploy within year**

Preliminary concepts do not include lots of tank, Bradley and armor crewmen in the MiTTs, for example.

The brigade expects those Soldiers will be among the significant number of Soldiers it will deploy instead as security force units in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom over the next six to 12 months, Belcher said.

MiTTs will contain specialists in key military fields, such as planning, logistics, security operations and intelligence gathering, Belcher said. They will be assigned to units of the Iraqi army and police forces to work with their leaders to improve their capabilities for success protecting their nation and defeating insurgents, he said.

While the brigade leaders are reshaping the brigade to fit its new mission, subordinate units have begun taking advantage of the planning stage to get back to basics.

After a year of motorized and dismounted (out of vehicle) training, units are scheduling training they had to forgo during the past year so that their Soldiers can polish skills they will need to perform well in their “mounted” military job specialties.

The 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery, for example, conducted Paladin gunnery Feb. 6-10 to give the tracked artillerymen practice firing their howitzers.

Bradley gunnery also is scheduled and tank units will soon conduct gunnery to get armor crewmen back in the turrets of their Abrams, doing what they would normally be asked to do, Belcher said.

Manning and training the brigade’s new MiTTs will take some time and considerable effort, Belcher said, but plans are to be ready for missions by this summer.